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ABSTRACT

The booklet is intended to help physical educators deal with behavior problems in students. A preventive approach is advocated which involves defining expectations of acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Examples are given of ways to reinforce desirable behaviors and prevent behavior violations through such actions as structuring the physical environment, modeling, and enforcing consequences. Among strategies suggested for undesirable behavior are planned ignoring, nonverbal signals, proximity control, use of humor to reduce tension, removal of distractors, and restructuring of the classroom program. (CL)

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BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION:

A HANDBOOK FOR TEACHERS

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may find these strategies and techniques helpful in encouraging appropriate or positive behavior during physical activity sessions. The methods and ideas presented in this handbook apply to all children but should be particularly useful to teachers of mainstreamed handicapped students.

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Some materials in this handbook were adapted from Conflict in the Classroom , 2nd edition, edited by Nicholas J. Long, William G. Morse, and Ruth G. Newman, Belmont CA, Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc. 1971.

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION TO BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Teachers need effective methods of responding to children who present behavior problems—the child who fidgets, who continually moves when he or she should be listening, who forgets quickly, who is easily distracted, who doesn't remember directions, who becomes unnecessarily upset over losing, or who is frustrated after a few tries at a difficult task. The student who can't accept criticism, who doesn't want to participate, who makes excuses, or who behaves aggressively needs assistance or guidance from an instructor to respond appropriately. The strategies and techniques discussed in this handbook are designed for use by physical educators in managing these and other problem behaviors.

Students with behavior problems

Most children present behavior problems at one time or another; however, some students seem to require more teacher attention than others. Some handicapped children are among those students who, at times, exhibit inappropriate behavior. Sometimes it is easy for the teacher to understand why these children misbehave or seem to need constant attention. At other times the causes of misbehavior may not be obvious. Often, when the handicapping condition isn't readily apparent to the observer, it is difficult for the teacher to understand why the child doesn't behave like other students. For example, a child whose handicap involves a visual perception or receptive language problem may compensate for those difficulties with inappropriate behaviors.

Usually students with these and similar handicaps misbehave for the same reasons that all children do. They become frustrated when they cannot complete a task easily. They discover another activity or piece of equipment which interests them more than the instructor's lesson for the day. They feel "under the weather," tired, or hungry. Or perhaps they have been exposed to some stressful events at home. For most children (and adults) these are factors that may make coping with the day's activities difficult.

Handicapping conditions sometimes make a child more vulnerable to frustration or failure. Such disabling problems as hyperactivity or an inability to maintain self-control are handicapping in the classroom environment. Medication imbalances, inability to perform required skills, or difficulties with the peer group all contribute to misbehavior.

The behavior management strategies and techniques presented in this handbook may be used effectively with all students. The presence of a handicapping condition usually has little influence upon the teacher's choice of a behavior management tool. The teacher's choice usually depends more upon the immediate cause of misbehavior than the presence or absence of particular handicapping conditions. Teachers who have an indepth knowledge of the individuals in their classes are able to identify the causes of problem behaviors more easily than those who do not recognize the nature of each child's instructional and affective needs.

Preventing problem behaviors

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" with respect to managing problem behaviors. A teacher can help prevent problem behaviors by discussing and establishing behavioral standards and expectations with students at the beginning of each unit or school year. Teachers might also prevent misbehavior by incorporating certain behavior management strategies into their teaching styles and daily instructional activities.

Defining behavior expectations

Each teacher defines acceptable and unacceptable behavior in his or her own fashion. The quality of the learning environment is dependent upon this definition. A rights and responsibilities approach may be used to establish a successful learning environment. A physical educator might define rights and responsibilities in the following manner:

TEACHER'S RIGHTS	TEACHER'S RESPONSIBILITIES
* students' attention during instruction	* preparation of an interesting lesson plan
* respect of students	* being ready at class starting time
* safe teaching environment	* consideration of individual needs of students

This list of rights and responsibilities is a personal list which may differ for each teacher.

The standards set for student behavior depend in large part upon the instructor's beliefs about the ideal teacher-student relationship. The classroom environment is usually more productive if the views of students are considered in the establishment of behavioral expectations. Student priorities in physical education may include:

STUDENT'S RIGHTS	STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES
* opportunity to learn	* regular class attendance
* appropriate and relevant learning experiences	* participation and effort
* personal safety	* respect for the teacher and other students
* opportunity to improve fitness and motor skill levels	* sharing of equipment, time, and space

Again, this list of rights and responsibilities is individual and may differ for each student.

Often problem behaviors can be prevented if the instructor and students take time to discuss these rights and responsibilities at the outset of the school year. The teacher should strive to define rights and responsibilities in positive terms, listen to the ideas presented by each class member, and involve the class in developing a list of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. It may be useful to post this list where all may refer to it when confusion or conflicts arise.

Once behavioral expectations have been established, the instructor should consider ways in which acceptable behavior might be promoted and the incidence of unacceptable behavior reduced. Consistent use of the strategies and techniques which follow in Section II may prevent many behavior violations from occurring. When planning each activity unit, the teacher might consider using these strategies to encourage skill improvement, knowledge gains, socialization, or affective growth among students. Use of some of these strategies may come naturally to the teacher, whereas, a deliberate attempt may be necessary to include other strategies into an arsenal of teaching skills.

Reacting to problem behaviors

Despite preventative planning by the instructor, children will sometimes misbehave. The strategies outlined in Section III may suggest to the physical educator ways and means of counteracting unacceptable behaviors in students. Strategy selection should be individualized for each student and will depend upon the teacher's understanding of the child and the perceived causes of the misbehavior.

SECTION II: WAYS TO REINFORCE DESIRABLE BEHAVIORS AND TO PREVENT BEHAVIOR VIOLATIONS

Structuring the physical environment

Preplanning of time, space, and equipment can create conditions which encourage positive behaviors. Before they enter a different location, children need to know what they are expected to do, where they should go, and what to do when they get there. "When you go into the room, take a seat along the wall" will give children a chance to become acquainted with a new situation. Chairs in place, equipment ready to use, markers for activity stations, a place for personal belongings, a clock or timer are aids which help to provide structure for children who need these limits.

For example:

Rotation in volleyball or a lead-up game like newcomb can be a disaster if children do not understand right-left sequences or if they cannot visualize space well. One method of structuring the environment is to tape alphabet letters to the floor on one side of the net and numbers to the floor on the other side of the net. The server rotates from the highest displayed number to number "1" at the net or from the last displayed letter of the alphabet to the letter "A" at the net. Other team members each advance one letter or number when it is their turn to rotate.

Another example:

A circuit may be used to provide structure in a weight training class. Although each girl or boy may begin at a different station, students follow a designated order in performing exercises. Instead of entering the room and using apparatus of his/her own choice, each student knows that he/she must begin at a pre-assigned station and follow the circuit in order. This prevents disputes over apparatus and insures that students perform a well-balanced set of exercises.

Modeling

Teachers must consistently display behaviors which they expect of their students both in words and actions. "Do as I do" is often more effective than "do as I say." Instructors should consider these suggestions:

* Permit students to challenge your ideas in a positive manner.

* Demonstrate safe use of equipment and apparatus.

* Dress appropriately for the activity being taught.

* Participate in class activities such as warmup exercises when you are able to supervise while performing.

For example:

Jeanne has a mild orthopedic handicap which prevents her from running fast. In a kickball game some students complained that they did not want her on their team. The instructor might suggest that Jeanne is quick at stopping the ball and throwing it to the appropriate base, and that she always tries her best. This praise may encourage other children to echo support for Jeanne's efforts and motivate her to participate more fully in the activity.

Another example:

One task required of beginning swimmers is to hold their breath while submerging under the water. In most beginning swimming classes, there will be a few children who are afraid of attempting this skill. A thoughtful teacher might reassure a frightened child by modeling lead-up activities to the required skill, such as splashing or washing one's face in the water, dipping one's face in the water, and submerging the head under the surface.

Reinforcing desirable behaviors

Positive reinforcement can be used to promote a variety of desirable student outcomes including skill improvement, positive self-concept and socialization habits and increased effort. Positive reinforcements such as verbal praise, opportunity to demonstrate, or public recognition of achievement increase the likelihood that appropriate behaviors will be exhibited again in future class sessions. Both practical experience and research evidence indicate that the teacher should try to provide reinforcement which is

* clear - the student should know which behavior is being reinforced.

* direct - feedback should be provided immediately and should be specific to the student's performance.

* valued - the reward needs to have positive value for the student.

To be effective in reinforcing desirable behaviors, teachers need to understand each student's affective and instructional needs.

For example:

During a circle game of "hit the pin" some children find it hard to maintain attention while waiting for the ball to come to them. The teacher could reinforce children who are attending to the game by selecting them to reset the pins.

Another example:

Students who have demonstrated positive effort during the instructional phase of a class session may be rewarded with time at the end of class for a special activity, such as free shooting at baskets, dancing to music of the students' choice, or extra time for individual practice. Meanwhile other students could meet in a small group with the teacher to discuss class activities or review their behavior in terms of the "rights" and "responsibilities" described at the beginning of this handbook.

Regulated permission

At times it is wise or necessary to permit exceptions to normal school routines for a child who is confronted with unusual stress or difficulties. Sometimes when a child's behavior is affected by circumstances beyond his/her control and the child cannot control feelings or impulses easily, it may be necessary to provide the child with a special activity or setting in which to regain composure. The child should understand that this privilege is the result of unusual circumstances.

For example:

Tommy's favorite teacher has been on sick leave for a week. He is upset by the change in routine, and he is taking his feelings out on other children by being argumentative and by harassing his peers. This behavior has been carried over into the physical education setting. After discussing Tommy's behavior with him, the physical education teacher might provide Tommy with an opportunity to find emotional release by scheduling some special time for individual practice or instruction in the gym.

Another example:

Richard is a hyperactive child who has difficulty standing in line waiting for return to the classroom. While others in the class are lining up, Richard could be assigned the job of returning equipment to the storage area, thereby minimizing the possibility of disruptive behavior with other students.

Developing, stating, and enforcing consequences

Students need to know that there are predictable consequences to their behaviors. If they disregard the rules, then certain actions are taken. The consequences must be stated clearly, relevant to the behavior violation, practical to carry out, non-punitive, and directed toward fostering responsibility and good decision-making.

For example:

When floor hockey is played indoors, a common and dangerous violation is to raise sticks high when shooting. The teacher should establish definite consequences for raising sticks above shoulder level, such as a one-minute time-out penalty for the offending player. The referee must then be consistent in enforcing the violation each time it occurs. Some students need to be reminded regularly and in a variety of ways of the consequences of behavior or rules violations.

Another example:

In a team game such as soccer, students must learn to play their own positions. When students ignore their specific duties or follow the ball without regard to their own side of the playing field, the teacher could stop play, restate the rules, and describe the consequences for failing to obey the rules. For example, players could be warned that if a play is made by someone who is not within the proper playing position on the field, the action will be stopped and the opposing team will be awarded a free kick. A transitional period may be needed in which students are reminded when they are not playing their assigned position and are not penalized. When the referee is certain that all players understand their limits, the consequences should be restated and enforced.

Contracting

A contract is written or verbal agreement made between a teacher and student as part of a conference in which problem behaviors are acknowledged, expected behaviors are defined, and appropriate rewards for expected behaviors are identified. Contracting is most effective when the student assists the teacher in setting behavioral or skill standards and in identifying a valued reward. Contracts may be used to motivate students to achieve a personal goal such as a weight loss or strength gain, or they may be used as a strategy for reducing the incidence of behavior violations such as the use of objectionable language and aggressive behavior.

For example:

Jeff was not bringing his swim suit to school because he was afraid of swimming. Recognizing the student's concern, the teacher asked Jeff to help her make a list of his current aquatic abilities and skills he could be expected to attempt. Jeff agreed to try the skills listed on the contract, and the instructor agreed not to deviate from the list. The student's reward was riding back from the pool in the front seat of the bus.

Another example:

Most junior high school students understand that their grade in physical education is based in part upon proper attire, regular participation, and improvement. To emphasize these expectations to students who do not feel competent in the physical education setting, it may be effective for the teacher and student to develop a contract which assures the learner a satisfactory grade if achievable objectives in each category are fulfilled.

SECTION III: STRATEGIES WHICH MAY BE USED WHEN UNDESIRABLE BEHAVIOR OCCURS

Planned ignoring

Much child behavior carries its own limited power and will soon exhaust itself if it gains no attention, either positive or negative. Assuming the behavior will not spread to others or disrupt the normal process of the class, the teacher may ignore the behavior and thus extinguish it. This may be part of a larger plan to ignore negative behavior and reinforce positive behavior. The emphasis, of course, must be on reinforcing the positive.

For example:

The current physical activity is aerobic exercise. Jimmy's initial reaction to exercising to music was his loud announcement that it was "dumb girl's stuff" and he was not going to participate. The teacher ignored his remarks and non-participation while the rest of the class began to exercise. Jimmy stood in place and watched. His verbal remarks soon began to diminish and, as the music became more enticing and others seemed to be having a good time, he joined the activity.

Another example:

While teaching the skills of dribbling in a basketball class, the instructor called a halt to the action to provide additional cues. Lois continued to dribble the ball, instead of holding it. The teacher continued the explanation and demonstration, ignoring Lois' behavior. Receiving no attention for her action, Lois soon stopped and joined the class.

Signal interference

Teachers usually have a variety of signals that communicate to students a feeling of approval or disapproval of particular behaviors. Some disapproving non-verbal techniques, can be communicated through such actions as:

* eye-contact
* hand gestures
* tapping or snapping fingers
* coughing or clearing one's throat
* frowning
* body postures

These non-verbal signals are most effective when employed at the beginning stages of misbehavior.

For example:

Debbie has an individualized exercise card which she uses each morning for self-directed activity. She likes to have teacher attention, but this is not always available since other children are also following their own exercise cards and need occasional help. Debbie will sometimes deliberately perform the wrong exercise and tell the instructor that she doesn't know what to do. An eye-to-eye look, with no words, causes Debbie to return to task without verbal prompting.

Another example:

A common occurence in secondary schools is the invasion of the gymnasium by students unassigned to physical education at that time. The wanderers may begin a conversation with a friend in the class. If the teacher walks toward a student not scheduled in the class, catches his/her eye, and points toward the door, the student will usually take the non-verbal hint and leave.

Proximity control

Teachers know how effective it is to stand near a child who is having difficulty controlling behavior. The teacher serves both as a protector and as a reminder of behavioral expectancies. Students are often more aware of their actions in the immediate presence of a teacher. Therefore, the teacher's presence may help a student to regain self-control or to cease undesirable behavior.

For example:

Although they may be trained in safe workloads and proper lifting techniques, students in weight training classes sometimes disregard the instruction they have received and try to impress their classmates with feats of extraordinary strength. Teachers can curtail such unsafe practices by moving nearer to the offending student.

Another example:

When children are asked to hold hands while making a circle, some children may refuse to hold hands while others may pull or squeeze hands instead of using an appropriate grip. In this situation, a teacher might stand between two children who need help and might ask other available adults to stand beside "risk" children. Responsible students might also be asked to take these positions.

Interest boosting

If a student's interest in a task is declining or signs of boredom or restlessness are being shown , it may be helpful for the teacher to briefly give special attention to that student. The teacher may interject some conversation of interest to the student. Stimulating this interest may motivate the child to continue the work and might present the teacher as a person to be pleased.

For example:

Some fitness exercises can become boring after a few repetitions. To maintain maximal performance a teacher might talk about favorite professional athletes while exercises are continued. Training drills used by outstanding male and female performers could be discussed and a few of them could be incorporated into the class routine. Students might become more motivated by the knowledge that their favorite players also exercise to achieve their level of fitness.

Another example:

In an elective gymnastics class, there was one student who was the state gymnastics champion. Because she had superior knowledge and ability, Lynne expressed boredom when the teacher was explaining how to execute some fundamental skills. After class, the instructor spoke to Lynne about her skills and asked if she would assist with instruction by demonstrating the skills to be learned in future classes. Pleased with this new role, the student altered her attitude and entered each class eager to participate and help others.

Tension decontamination through humor

Most teachers are aware that a funny comment may defuse a tense situation. A comical remark helps students to feel more comfortable when they are not quite in control of their feelings. Although teachers can't always come up with good one-liners at the right moment, any sincere effort to decrease tension may help put students at ease. Under no circumstances, however, should the teacher involve a student as an object of ridicule in a

joke. Relying upon sarcasm rather than humor in a tense situation may increase negative effects rather than improve the atmosphere. A positive example follows:

Many students are tense and nervous before sports contests, whether they occur within the context of a physical education class, an intramural setting, or interscholastic competition. Some individuals may be "psyched-out" by their opponents or are apprehensive about disappointing their team or losing the game. Other children become tense before participation in individual sports events because they must perform individually in front of their peers or an audience. A clever teacher can help students to keep the competition in perspective and to feel more at ease by interjecting some humor into the "pre-game" huddle talks or instruction.

Hurdle help

Students occasionally experience difficulty learning new skills. They need to be able to overcome a particular obstacle that has stopped them. The teacher can be most helpful by giving a little extra assistance at a critical moment, thus prompting the child over the immediate barrier and allowing the learning process to continue.

For example:

Betty, who is right-handed, has difficulty playing handball. She consistently hits the ball off to her left. Frustration builds until she stalks off the court. Mr. Kramer, the teacher, takes Betty aside and explains that using her left hand as well as her right hand might make her more successful. He scheduled a practice session with Betty and a few other students needing special assistance to overcome specific learning barriers.

Another example:

Bob is able to swim the width of the swimming pool, but has not mastered his fear of attempting to swim in water above his head. After the teacher and Bob measured the distance in shallow water, they knew he was ready for the next step. The teacher told Bob that she would swim beside him. Bob then felt confident enough to try to swim in deep water.

Restructuring the classroom program

Some teachers have difficulty departing from their prepared schedule and lesson plans for any reason. Discipline and structure are necessary but they may sometimes stand in the way of immediate class needs. Some flexibility seems sensible. Restructuring plans can be effective in helping to drain off high tension or emotion. The idea is to change

plans, format, task, or location based upon perceived class needs.

For example:

Mike came into class appearing disturbed and grumpy. When asked what the problem was, he burst into tears saying that his dog had died. The entire class became affected and distracted by his story and behavior. It was both necessary and helpful to deviate from the class plan and encourage the students to talk about their feelings before continuing with the planned lesson for that day.

Another example:

Following aerobic exercise, there was a period of time for students to dance to disco music. Yesterday's lesson using this procedure had been very successful, but today it seemed to fall apart. Students were not using space well, were talking in small groups and were not participating. The teacher changed the format quickly. The music was stopped and the class was asked to form a large circle. The teacher gave instructions for a follow-the-leader type dance in which everyone copied the leader's movements, while still practicing disco dancing.

Support from routine

Students need varying levels of structure. Some children become anxious and misbehave when unexpected changes occur. For these children, a daily schedule is necessary to help allay some of their feelings of anxiety. When unexpected events occur, it helps these children to revert to their previously learned structured patterns.

For example:

To provide support for students needing structure, the teacher might state class rules and expectations at the beginning of each unit. To reinforce this structure, the teacher might also provide a daily outline of the day's activities and objectives before issuing any equipment.

Another example:

Once a week the Recreation Department conducts an after-school program. Yesterday the children were in the all-purpose room waiting for the leader who was unavoidably late. Unsupervised, they became noisy and began running erratically in a vigorous tag game. One of the physical education instructors walked by the doorway, heard the noise, and saw the general disorder. He used his regular organizational structure with which the children were familiar. "Please sit on the steps and wait for directions." Most of the children responded at once to this familiar request.

Direct appeal to values

A teacher often appeals to a child's sense of right and wrong when intervening in a problem situation. The appeal might be directed toward

the child's relationship with the teacher, the child's sense of sportsmanship, the child's need for peer approval, the power of teacher authority, or the child's sense of self-respect. A private talk with the student away from the stressful situation may produce positive results.

For example:

Teams had been selected and an intramural tournament was in progress. Hank had decided that he no longer wanted to play on his team because it had lost three games. The teacher had a private talk with Hank about the importance of each player, the importance of team cooperation, and the value of good sportsmanship. Hank agreed that he would continue to play on and support his team.

Another example:

Mary Ellen loudly voiced an opposition to taking part in a scheduled class jog. As encouragement for her to join the class, she was given positive reasonings behind the activity such as the health, fitness, and physical appearance benefits of jogging. Students were then given a run/walk option for the activity which appealed to Mary Ellen and several classmates. Accepting this compromise, they participated in the activity with enthusiam.

Removing distractors

It is often difficult for a teacher to compete for attention with certain objects such as squirt guns, balloons, flashlights, or toy trucks. Asking children to put these objects away may only be a temporary solution because the temptation to pick them up again may be too great. The teacher might avoid a power struggle by asking children to place these items in a more secure place or permitting the children to select one of several teacher-generated options for removing undesirable objects from the class setting.

For example:

When the activity requires that each child have a hoop, ball, or bean-bag, the teacher might keep all equipment in one place until the directions or demonstrations are completed and then distribute them. In some situations it may be necessary to collect equipment from students before ending the class session. If different materials are to be used, equipment used in the previous class should be stored before the next class enters the gym or playing field.

Another example:

A basketball class was learning the "give and go" technique. Students

had been issued balls, and during the explanation, Dave began to bounce his ball. The teacher requested that Dave throw his ball to him so that he could use it for demonstration. The teacher eliminated the distraction without getting involved in a power struggle over possession of the ball or following rules.

Antiseptic bouncing

When a child's behavior has reached a point where the teacher questions whether or not the child will be able to maintain self-control, it is often helpful to remove the student from the situation for a few minutes. There is no intent to punish but simply to protect until the child can get through a difficult period of time.

For example:

The class had lined up for dismissal after a very one-sided game of floor hockey. Marilyn was having trouble restraining her anger over losing the game. Paul aggravated the situation with verbal "We won!" remarks. Marilyn could not refrain from answering back and seemed to be on the verge of entering into a shouting match with Paul. The teacher asked Marilyn and a friend to go to the storage room and help put away equipment. They were happy to do this, and the responsibility removed Marilyn from the taunting of her classmates.

Another example:

In an intramural football game, Frank made a very careless play. He was quite distraught after his faulty performance. The teacher immediately sent in a substitute and called Frank to the sidelines. Frank had time for a brief rest and to regain his composure before being sent in again on a succeeding play. He might have lost his self-control if he had been taunted by his teammates or if he had not been able to deal with his own sense of failure following his error. The teacher prevented this loss of self-control by temporarily removing Frank from the game situation.

SECTION IV: CONCLUSION

The strategies and techniques presented in this handbook are not new or profound concepts to most teachers. In fact, most physical educators use these methods routinely when responding to problem behaviors. However, few teachers consider the entire range of possibilities when managing the problem behaviors of their students. Instead they rely on a few strategies which come naturally to them or which have been successful for them in the past. Many teachers could relate to their students more effectively if they were to expand their repertoire of behavior management strategies. This handbook was written to help teachers achieve that goal.